The Southern PATRIOT

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From "Children in America", photographic exhibit by Marion Palfi.

The SCEF: 1946-56 -A Brief History, A Proud Record

"The past is prologue," according to a half-million after-dinner speakers, at least. And there is truth in the old Shakespearean saw. But there is also a quality to the past that makes it not only a guide to future action but a drama, complete, stirring and valuable of itself.

In essaying a summary of SCEF projects over the past ten years no chronicle of less than volume size could come close to capturing the spirit, the heroism, the self-sacrifice of the individuals who participated. We hope that those who read and remember the parts they played will know that they have not been forgotten. We hope that those to whom this record is new will recall the regional situation in the years in which the events occurred.

1946

The SCEF underwrote a test case challenging the constitutionality of the Georgia county-unit voting system. Two pamphlets — "Would You Smile?" and "Look Him in the Eye"—presented statistical studies of Negro living conditions. Each booklet had a distribution of 50,000 copies.

TEN YEARS OF BATTLE FOR A SIMPLE TRUTH

This month marks the tenth anniversary of the Southern Conference Educational Fund. To look back is to feel venerable, so great have been the changes in the region since January 26, 1946. Yet again, so rich in promise has been the past decade, that to look forward is to enjoy in anticipation the years to come. And the SCEF has always looked forward.

If one is to appraise the history of the SCEF to date for some capsule meaning, perhaps one could say that the organization in its life span has demonstrated the virtues and the handicaps of being simple-minded.

Yes, *simple-minded*—in the sense that the SCEF, its officials, and its supporters believed the simple truth that racial segregation was morally wrong and should be abolished.

They held segregation to be evil because its fruits were fear and hate, rather than respect and love.

They were Southerners but they couldn't see how that exempted them from being Americans. And they didn't believe that laws creating second-class citizenship could be squared with American ideals of democracy and brotherhood.

This simple idea forms the core that has held the SCEF together these past years. It has been the basic message of every gathering, every piece of literature, every petition, every project of any sort the organization has sponsored. And even though—until the Supreme Court met the segregation issue squarely in 1954—the SCEF's program was "against the law" in the South, the simple truth found it many allies and friends.

Because of this support, and because the simplicity of the SCEF's attitude showed that it meant what it said, the Fund has received the full impact of professional bigots' wrath. But the SCEF has survived, survived without taking a backward step.

Looking back at the record, it is amusing—and perhaps instructive—to note that the *Southern Patriot* of January, 1946, carries a letter to SCEF Director, Dr. James A. Dombrowski, which states:

Dear Dombrowski:

I have just received through a friend of mine in Jackson, Mississippi, two sheets that your un-American, negro social equality, communistic, mongrel outfit is sending out throughout the country in your mad desire to build up a factual case against the right and prerogative of a United States Senator or Senators to filibuster any objectionable legislation that is proposed in this great body. . . .

The letter was signed: Theodore G. Bilbo, United States Senate.

And so one sees that with the white supremacists, nothing has changed. Yesterday Bilbo, today Eastland—but the prime target remains the SCEF.

Former heavyweight champion Gene Tunney was once asked what was the key to success in boxing. He replied: "Always fight another round." This, the SCEF has done for a decade; this, the SCEF pledges to do in the future—simply and directly, in the cause of plain truth and common decency.

A fight between a Negro and a white man in Columbia, Tenn., led to the terrorization of the Negro community first by an armed mob and then by state troopers. A hundred Negroes were arrested, many were beaten by police, and two were killed in jail. The SCEF printed and circulated 100,000 copies of a pamphlet giving the facts and protesting against the atrocity.

POLL OF SOUTHERN EDUCATORS FORECASTED EASE OF COLLEGE INTEGRATION

1947

A "Declaration of Universal Franchise" was signed by more than a hundred educators, union leaders, ministers and journalists. The document, widely distributed, challenged the schemes of various legislatures in the effort to circumvent Supreme Court decisions re: "white primaries." Later the federal rulings upheld the views expressed in the declaration.

On March 22, 350 Floridians attended a statewide conference at Winter Park to protest the Matthews "white primary" bill. Rev. D. C. Whitsett was chairman; Harry T. Moore, was a speaker; the SCEF Executive Director served as coordinator.

In October, the SCEF distributed 125,000 copies of "Separate and Unequal," a study with graphs and pictures of the effect of segregation in education. Said one passage: "A community that gives lip service to the ideals of equality, freedom and universal brotherhood, yet condones a set of human relationships that daily deny these ideals cannot possibly enjoy a healthy and stable mental life. A community, like an individual, cannot live with a big lie without serious psychological results and inevitable spiritual decay." Seven years later this concept, too, became part of the law of the land.

1948

"The Color Line in Health," gave a full documentation of how segregation literally cost lives by limiting access to medical care and creating unsanitary community conditions.

Three defendants, including the director of the SCEF, won acquittal on charges of violating the segregation ordinance in Birmingham, Ala. The case arose out of a meeting of the Southern Negro Youth Congress where Senator Glen Taylor was scheduled to speak. Birmingham police chief "Bull" Conner had harassed the program from the outset; the Dixiecrat revolt was brewing and five Negroes had been killed by city police within a month. Taylor, too, was arrested and received a going-over from police. The acquittals came because the city judge feared that the defendants were ready to make a federal test case of the matter. Ironically, Taylor was convicted and was unable to win a reversal upon appeal.

At a time when the Southern Governors Conference was promoting the idea of regional graduate schools as a means of staving off the demand of Negroes for entry into state professional and graduate institutions, the SCEF took a series of polls of Southern faculties on the matter.

Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt, Madame Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit, and Mrs. Mary McLeod Bethune at the SCEF reception in their honor.

A poll of the state university faculties in eleven Southern states revealed that in seven of them a majority supported graduate school integration; the University of Alabama yielded a tie vote; Georgia, Mississippi and South Carolina voted for the regional plan.

On Nov. 20, a group of 50 Southerners met in conference at the University of Virginia. In a pilgrimage to Monticello, the home of Thomas Jefferson, they formaly adopted a "Declaration of Civil Rights" that had previously been endorsed by 200 outstanding persons in the region. The declaration said, in part, "We still believe that all men are created equal and are endowed as men with certain rights . . . We take these rights to include equality before the law, and freedom from any discrimination bolstered by law; a right to vote; freedom of expression; an unrestricted access to all institutions supported by taxes for the public welfare, schools and hospitals not excluded; equal pay for equal work, and equal opportunity to receive training and to gain employment; and the right to unsegregated transportation, housing and assembly."

1949

A poll of 15,000 teachers in 155 Southern colleges and universities in which 3,422 replied revealed that seven out of ten favored integration in graduate and professional schools.

The SCEF served as coordinator for an *amicus curiae* brief in the Sweatt case, which resulted in the ending of segregation in the law school of the University of Texas. It was signed by 18 lawyers from 13 Southern States. One of the salient points argued was:

"The lawyer who has been educated in a segregated law school must inevitably find the attitudes ingrained in him by the segregation carried over into his practice, with consequent embarrassment, failure to adequately represent the interests of his client, tension between lawyer and client and other more subtle pitfalls. Only attendance at an unsegregated law school can give a white law student in the South the background of dealing on a man-to-man basis with Negro clients and Negro lawyers in his practice."

1950

Meeting at Atlanta University on April 8 some 250 professors and students attended the SCEF-coordinated Conference on Discrimination in Higher Education. They called for an end to segregation statutes, but also expressed the hope that "the educational institutions themselves, many of which were founded upon religious faith and high moral principles, will take the lead in bringing

MEDICAL SURVEY REVEALED HOW SEGREGATION COST LIVES

about fair play and a truly democratic culture."

Albert Einstein sent a message to the gathering which stated:

"If an individual commits an injustice he is harassed by his conscience. But nobody is apt to feel responsible for misdeeds of a community, in particular, if they are supported by old traditions. Such is the case with discrimination. Every right-minded person will be grateful to you for having united to fight this evil that so greviously injures the dignity and repute of our country. Only by spreading education among all of our people can we approach the ideals of democracy.

"Your fight is not easy, but in the end, you will succeed."

In December, the SCEF addressed an appeal to Governor John S. Battle of Virginia, asking clemency for the "Martinsville Seven," the seven Negro youths who were subsequently executed for raping a white woman. It was pointed out that in 13 Southern states during the period 1938-48, sixty-eight per cent of those executed for murder were Negro; 92 per cent of those executed for rape were Negro. Yet, according to 1940 census figures, Negroes made up only 23.8 per cent of the population in those states. On that basis it was urged that "judicial bias and undue severity toward the Negro defendant might reasonably be deduced."

Braving the coldest weather ever recorded in South Carolina, 125 Southerners made a pilgrimage to the Charleston home of federal judge J. Waties Waring. Waring's firm action had ended the white primary in South Carolina. He and his wife also spoke out against discrimination, despite tremendous pressure.

SCEF President Aubrey Williams presented the jurist with a citation which said: "It has been seen that many another, in your place, has found it possible, before obdurate prejudices and customs, to avoid the guidance of the noblest guarantees of our Constitution. Your own faithfulness in this field, despite environmental discouragement others have bowed to, has been exemplary and heartwarming."

1951

A reception by the SCEF honored Madame Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit, Ambassador of India, Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt and Mrs. Mary McLeod Bethune.

The celebrated photo study "Children in America" by Marion Palfi was booked for a year-long tour of libraries, schools and art galleries in the South.

After the brutal Christmas bombslaying of a NAACP leader Harry T. Moore in Florida, a group of fifty outstanding Floridians demanded that Governor Fuller Warren convene a conference to study and improve human relations in the State. The SCEF served as secretariat for the group.

1952

A girl student, Miss Odilla Jacques, at Our Lady of the Lake College in San Antonio won the $100 first prize offered by the SCEF for the best editorial on segregation to appear in a student newspaper.

Of 2,414 administrators polled, 711 replied. Favoring segregation of Negro patients were 479; integration was backed by 127. Seventy-six suggested the erection of separate hospitals for Negroes. The rest either did not answer the question or gave other answers.

In a poll of all the 42,500 white doctors in 17 Southern states, 5,750 replies were received. Of these, 64 per cent backed segregation of patients; 17 per cent integration; 11 per cent the erection of separate hospitals for the races. However, 71 per cent approved admission of Negroes to medical societies. Sixty-three per cent gave outright sanction to admission of Negro doctors to hospital staffs, and 14 per cent voted a qualified approval.

"The Untouchables," a 36-page multicolor pamphlet designed and illustrated by the famous American artist Ben Shahn, presented the SCEF case studies of hospital discrimination and exclusion. The booklet was written by the Southern journalist Alfred Maund and 25,000 copies were distributed. Mrs. F. D. Roosevelt devoted her column "My Day" for Oct. 17 to a discussion of the work, declaring: "It is such organizations as the SCEF that will really bring about the changes all of us hope for—not only in the South but throughout the country."

SCEF President Aubrey Willams appeared before the platform committee of the Democratic Party to urge adoption of an uncompromising civil-rights plank. The SCEF was the only Southern organization to take this stand.

President J. W. Marshall of Wayland Baptist College, Plainview, Texas, was the keynote speaker at a youth conference held during the Christmas holidays in Columbia, S. C. The event, coordinated by the SCEF and sponsored by some 400 persons throughout the South, under the chairmanship of Dr. H. D. Bollinger, of Nashville, Tennessee, drew 141 delegates from 48 colleges. The interracial assembly was housed at Allen University, in the shadow of Governor Byrnes' mansion. It received prominent and impartial press coverage. The assembly urged the governors of the Southern states to "act immediately to eliminate segregation in education." *The Nation* magazine reported the event under the heading, "The Future Comes to the South."

On Oct. 12 SCEF President Aubrey Williams and Governor Herman Talmadge of Georgia debated the issue of segregation in the public schools over the DuMont Television Network. Kineoscope recordings of the program were distributed to discussion groups over the South.

A medical advisory committee of Southern physicians was formed to aid the SCEF attack on discrimination in medical and health facilities.

Said the *Southern Patriot* in January: "Never has the Child been a more appropriate symbol of the New Year. For 1954 is destined to be known as the Year of the Child . . . If the (Supreme Court) outlaws segregation in education —as we think it must—the harsh graven face of the traditional South presents to the world will twitch in dismay. But in the fulness of time today's smiling child will take up the regional standard, still smiling—smiling with love for others with the radiance an easy conscience brings."

John Bolt Culbertson, an attorney in Greenville, S. C., vice-president of the SCEF, testified in behalf of a federal FEPC act. He told a Senate Labor subcommittee in Washington:

"The Old Order buttressed itself in the South by means of all-inclusive segregation statutes. Fortunately, these statues are wilting before the scrutiny of the courts. But unfortunately, no clear assertion of public policy has replaced them, and there is some uncertainty and lack of direction. A Federal Equality of Opportunity in Employment law would

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